

The Delta variant has been detected in 104 countries in new surge of the pandemic

Benjamin Mateus
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“The world is at a perilous point in this pandemic. We have just passed the tragic milestone of four million recorded COVID-19 deaths, which likely underestimates the overall toll. Some countries with high vaccination coverage are now planning to roll out booster shots in the coming months and are dropping public health social measures and relaxing as though the pandemic is already over.”—Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the Delta variant of coronavirus had spread to at least 104 countries last week in conjunction with the worrisome trend in the epidemiological curves of new infections. During the WHO’s coronavirus press brief, Dr. Maria van Kerkhove, the technical lead for COVID-19, warned about these dire developments. “I counted again this morning. There are more than two dozen countries that have epidemiological curves that are almost vertical right now,” meaning the pandemic is growing at an exponential rate.

On June 21, the seven-day moving average had reached a low of 360,000 COVID-19 infections each day. It has presently climbed to 425,000 cases per day or an 18 percent increase in little more than two weeks. The epidemiologic curve for reported deaths has also swung upwards. As of July 10, 2021, 187.2 million COVID-19 infections and 4.04 million deaths were reported globally.

In every region of the world, weekly statistics indicate that infections are either turning up or continue to remain high:

- The trend in Europe is alarming as the week-to-week change has been accelerating over the last three weeks. The week beginning June 28, 2021, there were 543,584 confirmed cases, a 40.1 percent increase.
- Though the Americas have seen a 13 percent decline over the last week in June, the number of weekly new infections remains nearly one million.
- Cases across Southeast Asia have turned up again with almost 613,000 infections per week, a nearly 7 percent increase.
- Similarly, the Eastern Mediterranean has seen cases

surge once more, with almost 246,000 infections for the week beginning June 28, 2021, an 11.1 percent rise.

- Africa had the highest number of confirmed cases ever reported during the pandemic, with 204,000 new infections, a 14.8 percent increase from last week. It appears the number of new cases being reported is slowing, but this will need to be followed closely.

- The Western Pacific continues to see high community transmission though reported cases have remained stable. There were 128,000 new cases for the week beginning June 28, 2021.

The epidemiological curves for reported fatalities are trending with the infections in their respective regions.

In the United States, where the Delta variant now dominates, the seven-day average of new daily cases has been rising since June 21, 2021, when they had reached their lowest point with only 12,000 new infections per day. The last time the US saw such numbers was on March 26, 2020, when the emerging pandemic first fell on the population of New York City.

Cases are climbing again, having reached 18,000 cases per day. At the end of last week, the US saw a sudden jump in new infections to over 27,000 per day. The seven-day average of deaths has ceased its decline, with about 220 people dying every day. As of July 10, 2021, the cumulative death toll stands at 622,819, and 34.7 million reported infections.

Florida appears to have become the new epicenter, as cases have jumped from around 1,000 per day in mid to late June to almost 5,800 cases on July 10, 2021. However, regions in the Southeast and portions of the Midwest where vaccination rates are comparatively low continue to see rising infections. COVID-19 hospitalization rates over the last two weeks have risen 40 percent for Arkansas, Nevada and Iowa.

Ashish Jha, dean of Brown University’s school of public health, who has taken a laissez-faire attitude about school reopening, told *Politico*, “I am a little surprised how quickly Delta has become widespread. We’re one week into July, and it is everywhere. It suggests that it is far, far more

contagious than the Alpha variant. It makes me nervous... how contagious it is and how quickly it has spread.”

Across Europe, weekly trends in cases have alarmed international public health agencies. Many countries are seeing vertical transmission rates, meaning cases are exploding. The Netherlands has a near 400 percent weekly increase in cases, with 22,071 new cases in seven days. Other increases: Greece, 163 percent; Spain, 101 percent; Belgium, 66 percent; France, 61 percent; Portugal, 39 percent; the UK, 31 percent with 203,159 new cases in just one week; Germany, 19 percent; and Russia, 13 percent with 171,858 new cases.

Despite these developments, the Euro 2020 football finals hosted more than 60,000 jubilant fans cheering at Wembley Stadium for their teams in the match between England and Italy. Both countries have seen around 128,000 of their citizens die during the pandemic. A guaranteed superspreader event that will claim more lives, the match epitomizes the dangerous game the ruling elites play with the population's lives.

In Africa, ten countries, including Libya, Senegal, Nigeria, Chad and Mozambique, are seeing cases doubling each week. Tunisia, with a weekly rise of 44 percent, reported 49,000 new infections for the week. The most severe outbreaks are unfolding in southern and eastern Africa. Zimbabwe, with 12,403 cases for the week, has seen a 67 percent weekly rise in new cases. With 137,861 new cases for the week, South Africa saw an 11 percent climb in cases but a 46 percent rise in fatalities.

For seven consecutive weeks, cases have been climbing throughout the continent. Infections increased by 20 percent for the seven days ending the first week in July compared to the previous week. Fatalities have also jumped by a similar figure. WHO's regional director for Africa, Matshidiso Moeti, stated, “Africa has just marked the continent's most dire pandemic week ever. But the worst is yet to come as the fast-moving third wave continues to gain speed and new ground... The end to this precipitous rise is still weeks away.”

Indonesia has assumed the wretched status of the epicenter of the pandemic in Asia. With a diverse population of 270 million people, 700 regional languages are spoken there, representing 300 ethnic groups. However, the pandemic has thrown the country into recession, adding to the social strife caused by the tsunami of infections.

The seven-day average in new infections continues to rise sharply, having exceeded more than 33,000 per day. Fatalities are abruptly climbing and will exceed 1,000 deaths per day on a seven-day average very soon. On July 7, 2021 alone, the country reported 1,040 deaths. The names of the dead are being announced from speakers at nearby mosques on Java, the most populous island, providing a grim

reminder of the virus's deadly toll.

However, according to Dr. Dicky Budiman at Australia's Griffith University, the official numbers are significant underestimates based on the fatality data recorded at local levels. “We know we have already achieved more than 100,000 a day,” he told the *Guardian*. The public cemeteries in Jakarta are brimming with corpses. According to city officials, the number of burials has spiked ten-fold since May.

As hospitals face a deluge of patients, doctors and nurses are also falling victim to the infection, further incapacitating the health care system's frail infrastructure. Oxygen and medical resources are being quickly exhausted as social tensions and confusion abound. Adib Khumaidi, the Indonesian Medical Association's risk mitigation team leader, observed, “What is happening right now in the hospitals is a functional collapse.”

With nearly 3.4 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines (44 doses for every 100 people) administered, there is an alarming trend that the rate of immunizations is beginning to decline globally. This is compounded by the continued disparity in vaccinations programs in different countries.

At present, 25.2 percent of the world's population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. However, only one percent of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose. As the bar graph demonstrates, Asia, South America and Africa, where the majority of the world's people reside, have seen a minuscule fraction of these life-saving treatments.

Governments of high-income nations have continued to ignore the repeated warnings made by the WHO to employ all public health measures to stem the rise in infections. Instead, the vaccines are used as levers for enacting measures to ensure a rapid return to economic normalcy regardless of the threat posed by the iterations of new variants that continue to develop higher virulence.



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